

reiterate them now. Bearing in mind all the deficiencies of the legislation under which the department has worked, and also the fact that in recent months the department has been ill-supplied with money for the carrying on of the work that has been begun, most of us believe that a genuine effort has been made by the officers of the department, who, despite recent criticism in certain quarters, have done and are doing a good job for the farmers. Although I believe the legislation under which they are operating is deficient and should be considerably altered as soon as possible, nevertheless I agree with the previous speaker that much good has been done by the officers of that department, and I hope and trust that the time is not far distant when their legislative powers will be widened and their opportunities for doing good greatly increased.

Vote put and passed.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.20 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 16th October, 1940.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Income Tax Assessment Act Amendment.

Returned to the Assembly with amendments.

2, Income Tax.

Passed.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 2), £1,200,000.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [4.37] in moving the second reading said: The object of this Bill is to obtain Supply to meet expenditure from Consolidated Revenue until the Estimates are passed. For the information of members, I am advised that the No. 1 Supply Act provided a sum of £2,450,000, made up as follows:—

	£
From Consolidated Revenue Fund	1,750,000
From General Loan Fund	400,000
For Treasurer's Advance	300,000
	<hr/>
	£2,450,000

Expenditure for the first three months of the present financial year out of Supply granted by the No. 1 Act is as follows:—

	£
Consolidated Revenue Fund	1,740,719
General Loan Fund	292,139

Expenditure from Consolidated Revenue Fund for the first three months of the present financial year is as follows:—

Under Special Acts	1,133,333
Governmental	802,148
Public Utilities	938,570

Making a total of £2,874,051

Interest and sinking fund included in expenditure under special Acts amounted to £1,022,008; while exchanges on remittances to London, included in Governmental expenditure, amounted to £178,295. The revenue collected for the three months ended the 30th September, 1940, is as follows:—

	£
Taxation	594,640
Territorial	92,200
Law Courts	19,700
Departmental	188,462
Royal Mint	9,022
Commonwealth grants	267,109
Public utilities	1,339,124
Trading concerns	1,592

Making a total of £2,511,849

From these figures it will be seen that the deficit for the three months ended the 30th September, 1940, is £362,202. This is an improvement of £4,317 on the first three months of the last financial year.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Did not the Government receive extra money this year owing to weekly collections of income tax?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Bill relating to such weekly deductions has only just passed this House. Some extra money has been collected, but I could not say what the amount is.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Deductions have been made from wages.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, but those deductions are included in the amount collected from taxation, £594,640.

Hon. G. W. Miles: To compare the figures for that period of both years is very difficult.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The comparison is as near as I can give it. The Commonwealth Disabilities Grant has been raised from £595,000 to £650,000, an increase of £55,000, and that makes a difference to our finances. Those are the particulars which have been supplied to me, and I feel sure the House will assist the Government by passing the Bill. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—MINE WORKERS' RELIEF ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. E. H. Gray—West) [4.44] in moving the second reading said: This is a short measure by which we propose to amend certain sections of the Mine Workers' Relief Act having particular reference to payments to the Mine Workers' Relief Fund, and extend benefits to mine workers who have not been previously provided for. Members are aware that it is compulsory for all men engaged underground in mines to contribute to this fund, and that benefits are derived from the fund by those who are unfortunate enough to be afflicted with miners' disease.

The Act provides that every mine worker shall contribute to the fund at the prescribed rate of 1s. 6d., on the occasion of

each and every periodical payment of wages to him by his employer. Similarly, the employer has to contribute an equal amount. The payments to the fund have been made half-monthly, which involves 24 contributions a year. A recent variation in the mining award, however, provides for fortnightly wages to the men, thereby increasing the number of contributions per annum from 24 to 26, as in two months of each year there will be three pay days. As the fund is in a satisfactory financial position, it is desired not to increase the contributions but to maintain them as at present. The Bill provides, therefore, that employers and employees alike shall be exempt from contributing on those days, thus making 24 contributions a year as in the past.

The Bill further provides for compulsory contributions to the fund by those who are qualified to receive benefits. The Act stipulates that a worker who has been notified that he has early silicosis and who decides in the interests of health to give up his mining occupation may, within three months after notification, apply to have his name entered in a register kept by the Mines Department. Each year this registration must be renewed by him. Provided he does not again work underground and renews such registration, his rights to compensation, in the event of advanced silicosis or tuberculosis intervening, are protected without further payments to the fund. As these men will be eligible for future benefits, it is considered only fair and reasonable by all parties that they should subscribe to the fund. Therefore, the Bill provides for compulsory contributions. Exemption will apply, however, in case of unemployment, illness or accident. Clause 5 of the Bill is a consequential amendment to Section 51, Subsection 2 of the Act.

Provision is made in the Bill to extend the benefits of the Act to those persons who are or who become incapacitated, or whose earning power may be materially prejudiced by any disease or malady attributable to working on a mine. A person claiming under this section would, of course, have to satisfy the board that the nature of his complaint was caused by his employment in the mining industry. The board may grant such benefits as may be prescribed by regulation to those persons who, whilst employed as mine workers to whom this Act applies, or within two

years after being so employed are, or become incapacitated, or whose earning power may be legitimately attributed to the nature of their employment as mine workers in the mining industry of Western Australia, and to the dependants of such persons. We propose to delete the words "whilst employed as mine workers to whom this Act applies or within two years after being so employed," and so extend the benefits of the Act to any person who at one time was a contributing mine worker, provided, as I said, that his ailment can be traced to his working in a mine.

The Bill proposes by an addition to Section 56 of the Act that no person living outside of the State shall be entitled to receive any benefits under the section unless he has been examined and found to be suffering from a qualifying disease or symptoms of disease prior to leaving this State. That amendment should appeal to the House because the present provision, we have reason to believe, has been imposed upon. Those qualified to speak say that this amendment will be advantageous and will safeguard the fund.

Hon. H. Seddon: Will it be retrospective?

The HONORARY MINISTER: No, it could not be retrospective. Finally, there is a proposal that a mine worker who leaves the industry may voluntarily subscribe to the fund and thus be enabled to qualify for benefits under the Act. I think members representing mining constituencies will agree that the measure is long overdue and will be of great benefit to men unfortunate enough to contract disease.

Hon. J. Cornell: I am afraid you are trying to bring too many under the fund.

The HONORARY MINISTER: It applies to 17 people. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. H. Seddon, debate adjourned.

BILL—FEEDING STUFFS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. E. H. Gray—West) [4.52] in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill which should meet with the general approval particularly of those members who represent the

primary producing section of the community. The Bill provides for the annual registration of all manufactured foods for stock, and that the purchaser of any such food shall be supplied with an invoice certificate containing prescribed particulars of the nature, substance, quality and percentages of nutritive and other ingredients in the food sold. Members may possibly wonder why it is necessary to introduce this amendment, as Section 5 of the Act provides that it shall be the duty of every person who sells for use as food for stock any article which by an Order in Council published in the "Gazette" is declared to be an article to which this section applies, whatever may be the name under which the article is sold, to give the purchaser an invoice certificate stating the name under which the article is sold, and the prescribed particulars, if any, of the nature, substance, and quality of the article, and the percentages of nutritive or other ingredients contained therein. This provision is not, however, considered sufficient, because it is not necessary to register with the Department of Agriculture any food sold for stock; and further, if it were decided to prescribe by Order in Council any particular stock food, it would be possible for the manufacturer to alter the name form, say, "Stock Life Saver" to "Stock Improver," when it would not be subject to the provisions of the Act until another Order in Council had been approved. Bran, pollard and stock licks are at present the only foods affected by the Act, although Section 5 provides that any stock feed can be brought within its provisions; but, as I mentioned before, there is no power to compel registration, and the Department of Agriculture is consequently at a disadvantage, and unable to exercise control in an efficient manner.

Over a period of years many requests have been received from farmers, poultry farmers, agricultural societies and other organisations, for some legislative control to be exercised over the sale of stock feeds. At the present time there are many such foods on the market which are not governed by the Act. These vary greatly in composition, and are frequently unsuitable for the purpose for which claims are made for them. Producers are often put to expense without obtaining any return. Such standard foods as meat meals vary in composition between very wide limits, and farmers have no way

of ascertaining the quality and values of stock foods which they purchase. The Department of Agriculture is continually being approached for advice as to the value of certain preparations, and in this regard numerous complaints are being received. The Bill, therefore, proposes to remedy the whole matter; and I feel sure every member will agree that the provision in regard to invoice certificates will be of inestimable value to the stock owner, as it will enable him to know the nutritive and other valuable food contents of the food before giving it to his animals. Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales have Acts in force compelling registration of stock foods and their composition, and technical officers of all branches concerned in the Department of Agriculture are in agreement as to the desirability and necessity of having similar legislation in this State. Protection has been afforded in case of fertilisers; and it would seem there exists as much necessity for a knowledge of valuable ingredients of stock foods as there is for similar information regarding fertilisers. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [4.58]: This is a measure which should be dealt with as one of urgency, in view of the serious position confronting the State. Undoubtedly there will be heavy demands for stock foods. Therefore I hope the House will agree to pass the Bill quickly, so that the Government may be empowered as soon as possible to make inspections. I remember that during the period of Mr. F. E. S. Willmott's tenure of the Lands portfolio a stock lick was brought along for examination and that analysis proved that it consisted largely of *Zamia* palm which of course is injurious to stock. I believe that incident was the cause of the enactment of the present statute. I hope hon. members will agree to pass the second reading to-day.

HON. G. B. WOOD (East) [4.59]: I also desire briefly to commend the measure. It is definitely a good Bill from the standpoint of poultry farmers, pigbreeders and dairymen, in fact of all who buy concen-

trated foods. For many years these people have been looking for legislation of this kind.

On motion by Hon. W. J. Mann, debate adjourned.

BILL—MCNESS HOUSING TRUST ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. E. H. Gray—West) [5.0] in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill by which it is proposed to grant authority to the McNess Housing Trust to allot homes on a weekly tenancy at a rental of 5s. per week. All maintenance costs, insurance, rates and taxes are to be paid from the rental received, and whatever balance is left will be credited to a general trust fund and used for further building operations. Members are no doubt aware that the generosity of the late Sir Charles McNess, made it possible for homes to be built and disposed of for those in poor circumstances, and that these homes are erected under the provision of the McNess Housing Trust Act 1930-1938. By the authority of the Act it is possible for approved applicants to purchase a home under the fee simple section on the basis of repayment at the rate of 5s. per week, from which all rates and other outgoings are paid, the balance being utilised in reducing the principal, the sale being made free of interest, and the applicant having the right at any time to discharge his total liability and obtain the fee simple title, or, under the free life tenure by which homes are allotted, without any payment whatever, with the exception of a charge for sanitary rates and water service.

By this Bill it is proposed to add a provision for letting homes at a rental of 5s. per week. If the Bill becomes law, it will therefore be possible for the Trust to operate under three categories, namely, the fee simple, by which homes may be sold, the free life tenure, and tenancy at 5s. per week. In explanation, for the reason for a provision in regard to tenancy, I would inform members that it has been found from experience that in many instances where applicants are old age pensioners or invalids they occupy properties for a few years only and the trust may then be called upon

to make a refund of the principal moneys paid. Where an applicant is occupying a home for 5s. a week, from which all rates, taxes and maintenance are paid, it is considered that the trust should not be requested to make refunds either to retiring applicants or to beneficiaries under the will of a deceased applicant. The trust is now endeavouring to provide satisfactory accommodation for a number of old age pensioners at a lower cost than would be the case if separate homes were built for each applicant. The costs of building are now far in excess of those originally intended, the standard four-roomed wooden cottage together with land costing over £400. The intention when the Act was originally introduced was to keep the cost to £250. It is not possible to erect a home for £250 and to give accommodation usually desired.

In cases of pensioners without families, however, a small home could be provided and attention is now being given by the trust to the erection of duplex houses which would give full and sufficient accommodation and, it is estimated, enable the trust to provide for two families and effect a saving of approximately £150 on every two approved applications of this nature.

The plans, a copy of which I shall place on the Table of the House, have already been passed by the Perth City Council, but if these homes were sold on a repayment basis difficulty would arise in giving a title in the event of any occupier of a duplex home tendering the total cost to the trust. It would be necessary to subdivide an allotment and it may not be possible to give a title for half a lot. The subdivision would require the approval of the Town Planning Board, and it is considered that such approval would not be given by the Town Planning Board as its regulations provide for a minimum frontage of 50 feet for any blocks in a re-subdivision.

Further, as these homes will be occupied by old age pensioners or adult invalids who will, in the majority of cases, live in them for a short time only, the trust desires to retain full ownership of the properties and use any surplus rental over and above the payment of rates, etc., for the purpose of building additional homes. The desire is to approve as many applications as possible under the Act as it is considered that this was the intention of the late Sir Charles McNess and the Government, and by allot-

ting properties at a rental of 5s. per week the trust believes it can carry out the intention of the Act without being placed in the position of having to give a title to the property to applicants who, subsequent to their occupation, improve their financial position to such an extent that they are able to repay the total cost of the home to the trust and obtain a clear title thereto without having had to pay any interest whatsoever for the money advanced.

The trust considers that it can do far more good by retaining ownership of a number of homes and allotting them on a rental basis in deserving cases, and if the circumstances of the applicants improve to such an extent that they are able to pay rental in the ordinary manner the trust will then terminate the tenancy and re-allot the home to another tenant for the period of that family's distress. In many cases in the past it would have been very desirable for the trust to let the houses but it has not had the power to do so. The trust does not propose to restrict its operations to the provisions of this Bill only, but desires this amendment so that it can, in its discretion, approve of applications under any of the three sections, namely, repayment section, free life tenure section and weekly tenancy section. Approvals under the weekly tenancy section will be given only where the trust considers it is the most suitable section under which to operate. That is a brief summary of the objects of the Bill which will commend itself to the House. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central) [5.10]: I commend the Bill although I do not think there is any need for commendation. I would not have risen except to ask whether it would be possible to supply more information to the House which, I am sure, would be received with interest. What I am sure members would like to know is how many of these houses have been built in the State, particularly the number in the metropolitan area and the country towns. I can speak for Geraldton where I am aware two have been erected for some years and both are occupied by deserving people. I happen to know also that that town could do with more of such houses. I have no desire to make out that the metropolitan area has been unduly favoured; I do not know that it has,

but if there is any money from the McNess bequest, that can be made available, I hope the country districts will receive due consideration. I support the Bill.

On motion by Hon. A. Thomson, debate adjourned.

MOTION—RURAL RELIEF.

To Inquire by Joint Committee.

Debate resumed from the 8th October on the following motion by Hon. A. Thomson (South-East)—

That a message be transmitted to the Legislative Assembly requesting concurrence in a proposal that a joint committee consisting of three members of each House be appointed to inquire into and report upon such measures which may be necessary and/or desirable to relieve those engaged in the rural industry from their present financial handicaps and problems.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [5.12]: I am afraid I cannot agree to the motion submitted by Mr. Thomson. When he presented it the hon. member did not speak at any length and I am assuming that he took it for granted that the House was well aware of the state of the rural industries in Western Australia, because in his short speech he made really only three points. The first was that the rural industries were in a deplorable condition; the second, that as a result of the joint committee which was appointed to inquire into another matter and which was very successful, in that the committee's recommendations were unanimously made, Parliament had accepted those recommendations almost in their entirety; and the third, which the hon. member stressed, was that there was another measure before this House introduced by him which measure he was anxious should pass the second reading stage and be left on the notice paper until such time as the joint select committee had brought in its recommendations. I think those three points cover the hon. member's remarks when introducing the motion. Dealing with the last point first, that is, that the Rural Relief Bill should pass the second reading and then remain on the notice paper until the recommendations of the joint committee have been received, it seems to me that that would be rather a big mistake on the part, not only

of the hon. member, but this House as well, because it would lead to considerable delay which, in my opinion, would not be in the best interests of those engaged in the rural industries and who are in such a desperate plight. May I suggest that the immensity and diversity of the problems are such that no select committee could hope to deal with them adequately in less than six months. They would be very fortunate if they could deal with it in that time, if we are to take as a criterion the experience of other committees and Royal Commissions that have dealt with similar subjects in recent times. The relief required is needed now and not in six months' or 12 months' time. To agree to the suggestion of the hon. member that we should hold up the Rural Relief Fund Act Amendment Bill until the committee presented its report would be a big mistake. It has been said in this House, and I believe it to be true, that until such time as that measure has actually been dealt with by Parliament there will be continued delay on the part of the financial institutions in the granting of money to enable farmers to carry on. If there is any truth in that statement, there is need for us to decide the matter one way or the other as quickly as possible.

With regard to the second point made by the hon. member, as to the success achieved by the joint committee appointed to deal with the selection of a site for public buildings, I consider that there is no comparison between the two problems. It was quite possible for members of the joint committee inquiring into a site for public buildings to inspect every possible site suggested, and to obtain in Perth all the information required. The members of that committee were able to secure at very short notice all the expert evidence they desired. The evidence taken by that committee indicates that it was successful in acquiring all the evidence it could possibly hope to get on that subject. An entirely different state of affairs exists with regard to the subject matter that would be referred to the joint committee suggested by the hon. member. In the first place, the causes of the problem are not entirely local; they are not confined to this State.

Hon. A. Thomson: It is a matter of concern to the farming interests of this State.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: I have not denied that. Naturally it is of very great concern to this State, but the causes of the

problem are not confined to Western Australia or even to the Commonwealth. They have an international significance. War conditions may be regarded as one reason for the troubles the farmers are experiencing to-day. Again, the question of prices is perhaps one of the most important factors affecting the position of the farmers. No industry has so many diverse problems as has the rural industry of this or any other State. The trouble is not confined to wheatgrowers or woolgrowers or fruit-growers. We know that the extent of our rural industries in this State is so wide and covers so many sections of primary production that if any committee is to deal with the subject in a satisfactory manner, it will have to spend a considerable time obtaining the information desired in order to frame recommendations for submission to the Government.

Hon. A. Thomson: What do you mean by a satisfactory manner?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I take it that the hon. member would desire the committee to deal with the matter in such a way as to obtain all the information it is possible to secure. All the necessary information cannot be obtained in this State.

Hon. A. Thomson: The committee could get a lot that would be very helpful.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am wondering whether the information it could obtain would be helpful; whether it would be in a position to obtain as much evidence as is already available to the people dealing with this problem. Hon. members are aware that within the last week or two there has been more than one conference in the Eastern States to deal with this question. They are also aware that at the present time the Ministers for Agriculture of all the States of the Commonwealth—

Hon. J. Cornell: That is to deal with an act of God.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: They have been dealing with problems affecting the primary industries of the Commonwealth for some time past. The hon. member who moved the motion is aware that quite recently there was a conference of Ministers of Agriculture and I have no doubt he is also aware that on the 25th of this month there is to be a further conference at which not only the Ministers for Agriculture of the various States will be present but which will probably be attended also by the

respective Premiers. So far as one can see at present, the matter is purely a question of finance. It has to be determined how far the Commonwealth and the States can go in providing the necessary finance to enable those suffering from adverse conditions to carry on for the next year.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Is not that a matter of drought relief?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That of course is an urgent matter.

Hon. A. Thomson: This is a broader subject.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: This is an urgent matter that cannot wait until such time as a joint committee has met and formulated recommendations.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The Minister for Agriculture put up a case to the Grants Commission that should satisfy the hon. member.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I was going to point out that not only have the Ministers for Agriculture of all the States been dealing with this problem for some time past, but references to the matter have been made to the Commonwealth Grants Commission, as was pointed out by Mr. Miles, and not only by representatives of this State but by representatives of all the other States as well. While we must recognise that rural industries throughout the Commonwealth are in a parlous condition, I regret that I cannot see that a joint committee as proposed by the hon. member will confer the benefits the hon. member seems to think it will confer.

During recent years a number of Royal Commissions have taken evidence not only in Western Australia but also in other parts of the Commonwealth. As a matter of fact, in the last few years no fewer than ten such Royal Commissions have dealt with problems associated with the rural industries either of Western Australia or of the Commonwealth as a whole. It is interesting to note that one or two have taken a very long time over their deliberations and have cost a considerable amount of money. I am not saying that that should be a bar to any further investigation in this State either by a Royal Commission or a joint committee but in view of the immensity of the problem it is not to be expected that a joint committee comprising three members of each House of

Parliament in this State will contribute to any material extent to a solution of the problem. We have had a Royal Commission on farmers' disabilities. It sat for two months and cost £300. We have had a Royal Commission on dairy farming in the South-West which sat for four months and cost £990.

Hon. T. Moore: And did a lot of good.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Then there was a Royal Commission on the Agricultural Bank which cost £2,218.

Hon. J. Cornell: And caused a lot of annoyance.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Royal Commission on stored wheat cost only £103 but the Royal Commission on the bulk handling of wheat entailed an expenditure of £1,569. There was a Commonwealth Royal Commission on the wheat, flour and bread industry which sat for two years and presented five reports. That cost £40,000.

Hon. A. Thomson: It did not cost this State £40,000.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No; I have pointed out that it was a Commonwealth Royal Commission. In this State we had a Royal Commission into the disposal of light and poison-infested lands which sat for approximately four months and cost £442. This year we have had two Royal Commissions, one into wheat held in storage and the other into the pastoral industry, the report of which is not yet available.

Hon. A. Thomson: I think it will be a very valuable report.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I agree, more particularly in view of the capacity of the Royal Commissioner to deal with a subject of this kind. That raises the question whether members of Parliament who might be appointed to the joint committee proposed by the hon. member would be the best persons to conduct such an inquiry.

Hon. A. Thomson: That is a reflection on Parliament.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not think so. I would ask to be acquitted of any intention to reflect on Parliament. I do not mean to reflect on any individual member of Parliament or on Parliament as a whole.

Hon. J. Cornell: A member of Parliament could get the same evidence as anybody else.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I would ask the hon. member responsible for the motion whether he proposes that the Minister for Agriculture should be a member of the joint committee. If so, I think I can say for the Minister that he would find it impossible to act in that capacity because he would not have the time. Our present Minister for Agriculture is just as capable as any other member of this Parliament to deal with matters of this kind.

Hon. G. W. Miles: More so.

Hon. J. Cornell: There are other members in another place just as capable.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not say there are not.

Hon. A. Thomson: In this House there are men as capable.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Minister for Agriculture is responsible for the administration of the Agricultural Department and is dealing with the problems to which the hon. member has referred.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: We have men here who could tackle them.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not want my remarks to be taken as a reflection on any individual, but I think it will be recognised that some men have particular capacities in given directions, and all members of Parliament have not the same capacity on all questions. That must be recognised. The question of markets is an important one and must be dealt with, and is being dealt with by the Commonwealth Department of Commerce. That department in consultation with the Agricultural Departments of the States, the experts employed by all those departments, and their Ministerial heads, are at present giving their best attention to the subject. One may ask what recommendations a local committee could make that could be acted upon as a means of giving practical help to the farmers of the State.

Hon. J. Cornell: Good recommendations were made in connection with the hire purchase agreement business.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I must ask members to allow the Chief Secretary to proceed. All will have an opportunity later to express their views.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I suggest that generally speaking any recommendations the committee would find it necessary to make would require considerable finance. The financial aspect of the problem has been dealt with by all the States of the Commonwealth as well as by the Commonwealth Government.

Hon. A. Thomson: Would you say that the recommendations that have been made so far are helpful?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I suggest that the subject at issue is so wide in its implications that any recommendations that might be made by the committee, and which involve finance, would involve finance far more than could be provided by the State. There is also a Commonwealth responsibility in the matter; to that the hon. member will agree. If that is so, I ask of what value a committee would be when the Commonwealth Government and all the State Governments are at present dealing with the question? Concerning the future of the rural industries of the State, in order to bring forward recommendations that could be acted upon, the committee would require to have regard for the planning of each of those separate parts that make up our rural industries, and some regard also for the question of export and for the future planning of agriculture. That is a subject that I think is far beyond what any committee of this kind could satisfactorily deal with in a reasonable and limited time.

Hon. A. Thomson: That may be your view, but others hold a different one.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member will have the opportunity to express his view when he replies. I am stating what I believe to be the position. Whilst everyone recognises that the rural industries of the State are in a parlous condition, I do not think the appointment of a committee of this kind will prove very helpful. It is necessary that assistance should be granted immediately to the people concerned. That matter has already been dealt with by the Minister for Agriculture and the Commonwealth Minister for Commerce. Conferences are being held to grapple with this vast problem. The problems of the future have been dealt with for some time past by those who have been appointed by the Federal Government and the State Governments. They are also receiving attention at the hands of our own Agricultural

Department, and allied departments such as the Agricultural Bank. When the hon. member suggests that a select committee of six might meet, review the position, and make recommendations that would solve the problem associated with our rural industries, I am a little afraid that he has not taken into consideration the immensity and diversity of the subject with which he desires the committee to deal. Whatever has to be done for our primary industries should be done without delay. Something must be done in order that those who are suffering so grievously may be able to carry on next year.

Hon. A. Thomson: What is to prevent that still being done?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: If there be any great delay in dealing with the matter, it will become increasingly difficult for these people to carry on. I think I have covered the objections I wish to raise to the appointment of this committee. It must not be said, because I am objecting to a committee of this kind, that I am advocating that there is no need to do anything on behalf of the people concerned. On the other hand, I say there never was a time in the history of the State when it was more necessary that something should be done.

Hon. G. B. Wood: What do you say should be done?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member wants a committee to decide that, and now he is asking me to say, on the spur of the moment, what I think should be done. It is not for me to suggest what should be done although I have my own ideas on the subject. Whatever is done will have to be done properly, and will require considerable finance. I cannot see that a committee would result in the benefit the hon. member seemed to think when he submitted the motion.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [5.37]: After listening attentively to the Chief Secretary, I have concluded that the section of the community Mr. Thomson desires should receive assistance has appealed in vain. It asked for bread and has been offered a stone. I presume the Chief Secretary's expressions represent the view of the Government. Whilst the methods advocated by Mr. Thomson may not attain the objective he seeks, I think he is to be commended, as are other rural members of the House, for the action that has been taken. The objective is a simple one. For the last 10 or

11 years the agricultural industry, not only in this State, but in the Commonwealth and the world generally, has drifted from bad to worse. The majority of those who have endeavoured to win a pittance from the soil find themselves totally bankrupt, and not only bereft of assets but apparently bereft of friends. Whilst I agree to a certain extent with what the Chief Secretary said, that a committee of both Houses cannot get us anywhere, I think we have to take the view that Mr. Thomson, speaking on behalf of a big proportion of his electors, has taken the only course open to him as a member of Parliament. Cabinets and Governments have grappled with the position. The Federal Government, irrespective of party colour, has given over £14,000,000 in wheat bonuses alone. I presume the majority of Mr. Thomson's constituents have asked him to appeal to the only source open to him, namely, Parliament. Our own rural constituents, Mr. President, do not concern us, because like the Spartans those in the South Province are nearly all dead, for the same reason that has induced Mr. Thomson to endeavour to obtain relief for his own constituents. The hon. member has asked the House, in a practicable or impracticable manner according to the view that is taken, to make certain amendments to a Government measure which was brought down in the endeavour to stem the drift and give relief to rural industries. He asked the House to agree to certain amendments of the Act, but was opposed by city interests. Mr. Drew, in a brief but excellent speech, suggested that we follow the Victorian lines, and make some inquiry with a view to remodelling or reshaping the Act that is on the statute book. As I have already indicated, the proposal was more or less damned from Dan to Beersheba, and has a very slender chance of passing through the House because of the undoubted opposition of the Government. The only other course open to the hon. member was to move for the appointment of a committee that would make some inquiry and arrive at some solution that would give hope to the section of the community he represents. That, too, has been damned. Mr. Thomson finds himself in the position that he has appealed under two headings. The only tribunal to which he could appeal was this House. He asked that the existing law should be amended and met with a

hostile reception. He has now approached the matter in a different way, and appears to have met with a similar reception. The hon. member has, however, done his job. He has a clear conscience and has nothing to answer for. He can say to his constituents, "I have endeavoured in the only way open to me to obtain relief for you, and failing that, to have some inquiry made." Both appeals have met with the same fate, and the rural industry still finds itself in the position of being without any further encouragement or help. By no stretch of the imagination can members urge that the conferences taking place between the Commonwealth Minister for Commerce and the State Ministers for Agriculture bear any relationship whatever to the points Mr. Thomson wishes to have investigated.

Hon. A. Thomson: Not the slightest.

Hon. J. CORNELL: It would suggest a comparison with the landing at Fremantle of the victims of a submarine attack. Some of the people might land in the attire that Adam first appeared in, and naturally some relief would have to be forthcoming before they could be presented in public. I do not know that any further remarks on my part will either hinder or help Mr. Thomson to achieve his objective, but I commend him for endeavouring to do a very good job on behalf of a section of the community whose only outlook, after Governments and Parliaments have grappled with their situation, is the prospect of sinking into still greater depths of dire adversity. That is the position of the agricultural industry to-day.

HON. T. MOORE (Central) [5.47]: The position of the agricultural industry has been debated in Parliament very fully from time to time. While the Minister has indicated his opposition to the proposal to appoint a joint select committee to investigate the condition of the industry and methods to be adopted to afford it relief, I think a step along those lines would result in some good. I am satisfied that to-day our financial institutions are adopting a very short-sighted view of the agricultural industry. On the other side of the world, cattle, sheep and pigs are being slaughtered in great numbers, with the result that after the war there will be a tremendous shortage. That will provide a wonderful market for our people if they have stock on hand. That there will be such a shortage must be obvious because

the supplies of foodstuffs that formerly were distributed throughout Europe via the British market, have ceased to operate, and stocks cannot be maintained as in the past. We know what is happening in the countries that Germany has occupied, and we have read of the stock being commandeered and slaughtered for consumption. Let members make no mistake on this point: The financial institutions, and not Parliament, are running this country. Those financial institutions should take the long view. I believe they are not doing so because, for instance, they are not making provision to save stock that will die within the next six months unless something is done quickly to save them.

Hon. G. B. Wood: There is no doubt about that.

Hon. T. MOORE: We are confronted with the possibility of tremendous stock losses, whereas we should be endeavouring to maintain our herds and flocks.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The financial institutions are prepared to assist provided you get hampering legislation out of the way.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: That has nothing to do with it.

Hon. T. MOORE: I have no evidence that the financial institutions are prepared to assist the industry. If I had, I would not be speaking in this strain.

Hon. L. Craig: Nor have you any evidence that they are not assisting.

Hon. T. MOORE: I have evidence that they are marking time, and many farmers do not know how they are going to get through the next few months.

Hon. L. Craig: Have they made any application to the financial institutions for assistance?

Hon. T. MOORE: Mr. Craig is always interjecting when I speak on behalf of my constituents. I tell him that if he made a trip through the areas to which I refer, he would come back with a totally different impression. I believe Mr. Craig is fair-minded, but unfortunately he has in the South-West everything that he wants. He thinks that is all that matters. I assure him that there is a lot tremendously wrong in other portions of the State, where a serious problem confronts the settlers. Fortunately, that does not apply to my province, because it is a particularly bright spot in the State's agricultural areas to-day. I have in mind other parts of the State that are in

a parlous condition. I know, just as Mr. Craig knows, that there will be tremendous losses unless the financial institutions buy chaff for feeding to the stock, and yet those institutions are not doing so to-day. They prefer that the crops should be harvested instead of helping to have them cut for chaff.

Hon. G. B. Wood: We asked the financial institutions to do that, but they refused.

Hon. T. MOORE: From time to time we have heard much adverse criticism of the Agricultural Bank, but I know that that institution is doing much along those lines. To a great extent it has provided for the chaff requirements of its clients in order that the stock may be saved. I have no evidence that the other financial institutions are doing likewise. It will be a terrible calamity for the State as a whole if our stock are allowed to die instead of steps being taken to save them. Particularly is that so in view of the fact that the flocks and herds represent assets for which we know there will be a ready market. Wheat is in a different category. We can soon make up any leeway in the production of that commodity because it is a seasonal crop. Our flocks and herds, once we allow them to be depleted, will take years to build up again.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Sheep were sold at Katanning yesterday for 1s. 6d. a head.

Hon. T. MOORE: Those sheep were obviously auctioned in the hope that someone would take them away and save their lives. That is the unfortunate position that confronts many farmers to-day. In my opinion, if representatives of the financial institutions could be got together and the facts placed clearly before them, they would agree to do what the Agricultural Bank has already done.

Hon. G. B. Wood: No, they would not. We have tried that already.

Hon. T. MOORE: I believe that something could be done at a round-table conference. In fact, I believe round-table conferences always result in good. In any event the representatives of the financial institutions should be brought together to discuss the matter, and that would be the result if we appointed a joint select committee. By that means we might achieve our end much more quickly than the Chief Secretary seems to believe possible.

Hon. A. Thomson: It is the only way.

Hon. T. MOORE: Unless something is done quickly, our flocks and herds will die off and the State will be in a really parlous condition. On the other hand, if our flocks and herds are kept alive now, we will have a ready market for stock next year. That will apply to pigs as well as to cattle and sheep.

Hon. J. Cornell: And to horses too.

Hon. T. MOORE: I am not sure of the position of the horse. I would like the horse used in the agricultural areas in numbers such as I see in my district. I submit to the House that this is the time when the financial institutions should be prevailed upon to play their part. In a few months' time it will be too late. I certainly hope the motion will be agreed to, if only that we may get representatives of the financial institutions together for a thorough discussion of the position of the agricultural industry. By that means the farmers will know whether their stock are to be saved or allowed to die. If allowed to die, it will be a calamity to the State in general and to the farmers in particular. I commend the motion to the House.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West) [5.55]: I was rather amazed at Mr. Moore attacking the financial institutions for not doing something to assist the agricultural industry, at a time when the sword of Damocles is hanging over their heads threatening to cut down the value of the securities of those institutions. Any advances they may make to the farmers—and they are making them—would have no effect on the value of the properties. The provisions of a Bill now before the House embodies a proposal compulsorily to write down the value of agricultural properties, yet at the same time members suggest asking the financial institutions why they do not advance money to keep alive the stock on those properties. In effect, they say, "Why do not you advance money and immediately have it written down?"

Hon. A. Thomson: You know that is absurd.

Hon. L. CRAIG: It is not absurd at all.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: It is absolutely absurd.

Hon. L. CRAIG: The fact that a certain Bill is before Parliament has resulted in hundreds of accounts being held up.

Hon. H. L. Roche: That is intimidation.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Were you told that authoritatively?

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes. A manager of one of the commercial financial houses told me that he had a pile of papers about two feet high all relating to applications for money, and he said, "I will not deal with one of those applications before I know the fate of the Bill."

Hon. J. Cornell: That has been going on.

Hon. L. CRAIG: The manager said that the institutions were not justified in doing anything until they knew their position.

Hon. A. Thomson: We should have a joint select committee to deal with that phase.

Hon. L. CRAIG: The institutions are not prepared to act otherwise in the circumstances. Mr. Thomson speaks about referring the matter to a joint select committee. We know what such a committee would do. Only one finding could be returned. We know that only one thing is required, and that is money. Whatever findings were submitted by the select committee would be represented by that one aspect—money is wanted. The gravamen of the findings could not be otherwise.

Hon. A. Thomson: What would you suggest?

Hon. L. CRAIG: What other findings could be submitted that did not mean that money was required?

Hon. A. Thomson: What do you suggest as a remedy?

Hon. L. CRAIG: I think it is a national matter, and if any section is to assist the whole of Australia should be charged with that task.

Hon. A. Thomson: And in the meantime the farmer is to go to the wall.

Hon. L. CRAIG: In no other way could the colossal task be adequately dealt with. As it is, members are attacking the very people who are endeavouring to assist the farmers now.

Hon. A. Thomson: We are not.

Hon. L. CRAIG: It is being done by means of a Bill that is before Parliament. The financial interests are therein bitterly attacked, and that is having an extraordinary result. The main argument advanced so far is that Victoria passed legislation of such a description, but the Rural Bank of Victoria has taken over a great many accounts of the private financial institutions and banks. Victoria is in a much better

financial position than Western Australia, yet I was informed yesterday on very good authority that the Rural Bank of Victoria has taken over innumerable accounts of the banks and financial institutions.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Was that before or after the accounts were written down?

Hon. L. CRAIG: The accounts may have been written down, but the fact remains that in Western Australia the Government is not able to carry these clients. That is the danger confronting us to-day.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: The Victorian Government found money for that purpose.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Is the Government of this State prepared to find the necessary money?

Hon. H. V. Piesse: No.

Hon. L. CRAIG: It is not prepared to do so because it cannot provide the necessary funds. The Government is not unwilling to assist but is unable to do so. Now the suggestion is to antagonise institutions that are doing their best—

Hon. J. Cornell: For themselves.

Hon. L. CRAIG: — as trustees. However, we are dealing with a proposal to appoint a joint select committee to investigate these matters.

Hon. T. Moore: That is the point. What is wrong with the proposal?

Hon. L. CRAIG: There is nothing wrong with it, but what can we hope to obtain as a result of such a move? I can see no other possible recommendation but one that will have no effect whatever.

Hon. A. Thomson: How do you know that?

Hon. L. CRAIG: The only result of such a move would be to delay help that is being prepared. If that assistance is held up, the further delay will have a serious effect. We are fiddling while Rome is burning.

Hon. A. Thomson: And what do you suggest?

The PRESIDENT: Order! I must ask hon. members to keep order. Mr. Craig will proceed.

Hon. L. CRAIG: If I thought that the carrying of the motion would be effectual, I would support it, but we know what the findings will be. We also know that money must be obtained to save the rural industry.

Hon. A. Thomson: Is that the only thing?

Hon. L. CRAIG: The Government knows that, and the financial institutions appreciate the fact.

Hon. A. Thomson: Yet nothing has been done.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Will the investigations of the joint select committee and its findings result in more being done than is being done at present?

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Yes.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Nothing of the sort. It is said that some of us are not aware of the bad conditions prevailing in the rural industries, but I think members are aware that the condition of the pastoral industry is worse this year than is the condition of the agricultural industry. Yet not a word was said by the pastoralists of the North-West this year, the previous year or the year before that.

Member: A Royal Commission was appointed last year to inquire into the pastoral industry.

Hon. L. CRAIG: But the drought in the North-West has continued for a number of years.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. L. CRAIG: I am drawing fire from all sides.

The PRESIDENT: I must ask hon. members to observe the rules of debate.

Hon. L. CRAIG: There is a member of an old family present—

The PRESIDENT: I hope the hon. member will proceed with his speech.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Greater losses have occurred in the North-West than have been experienced in the agricultural districts.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Don't forget the time you had after the last war.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Mr. President, the hon. member is going back to the days of my childhood. The agricultural industry is represented by a larger number of members than is the pastoral industry. If the hon. member who accused me of knowing nothing about the wheat industry would journey to the North, he would have a much sadder tale to tell than the one he told us to-day about the agricultural industry.

Hon. A. Thomson: We quite agree.

Hon. L. CRAIG: The pastoralists are not squealing. They intend to get through by their own efforts.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Did not they want the Royal Commission?

Hon. L. CRAIG: They did ask for it. Many pastoralists who once were wealthy are to-day almost penniless, yet they are doing their best to carry on.

Hon. G. B. Wood: So are we.

Hon. L. CRAIG: No, you are not.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Yes, we are.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I have not heard so much squealing in this State as I have heard during the last two years from some agriculturists.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. L. CRAIG: I cannot see that any good will result from the appointment of the proposed committee. If I could see one ray of daylight, I would support the motion. I know what the finding of the committee would be; it is that more money would be required. But where would the money come from? The committee would do no good, and so I must oppose the motion.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central) [6.3]: Mr. Craig asserts that he can see no good in the proposal for this committee. I am perfectly willing to concede to the hon. member his right to his opinion, but nevertheless a majority of members perhaps see a ray of sunlight in this proposal. I do not wish unduly to emphasise this fact, but we should not forget it, that the suggestion for the appointment of this joint committee comes from an hon. member whose standing in this Chamber is very high. He is a member of very many years' experience. I do not want to be personal, but he is much more experienced than is Mr. Craig.

Hon. L. Craig: Hear, hear!

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: In my opinion, the suggestion should be treated with respect. I am not going to speak with any heat on this subject.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: We had enough from the previous speaker.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Quite enough. This motion should be debated calmly; it is so serious as to warrant earnest and careful consideration. Mr. Cornell referred to Mr. Thomson's constituency, but I point out that the matter affects all agriculturists throughout the State. I pay tribute to the calm way in which the Chief Secretary spoke; he set us a good example by not be-

coming heated, but he said the appointment of this committee would not solve the problem. I agree with him. The subject is too complex to be solved entirely by a joint committee, but if we can in any way lessen the real burdens of our farmers the occasion demands that we should endeavour to do so. Our farmers are not a lot of squealers; but they have good cause and every right to expect Parliament to come to their assistance. Equally with the pastoralists they have over a period of years fought a losing battle. I said, when speaking on a previous Bill, that perhaps the appointment of a committee such as is proposed might result in our seeing a gleam of light. Our primary producers, in common with other primary producers of the Commonwealth, have been unduly penalised over a number of years by the high tariffs which have been imposed upon all their requirements. As has been remarked this afternoon, the question is not altogether one for the State Government, which has its limitations. There are, however, financial institutions in this State that will not see the light. I propose to relate an instance that came under my notice yesterday. I was approached at Geraldton by a man 76 years of age who desired to apply for the old-age pension. He and his good wife had spent their lives on a farm. I interviewed the Deputy Commissioner in Perth and was informed that the application was refused because the applicant owned a farm. The farm is mortgaged for £3,500. He is not now on it, but is living in Geraldton and is being kept by his son. He is denied the pension because his farm is valued at £3,500. By whom is the farm so valued? By the bank, which knows as well as I do that there is no possible chance of securing anything like that price for the property. If the farm were placed on the market to-day it would not fetch half that amount. Yet this man and his dear old wife are denied the pension, to which I consider they are entitled.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Would a joint committee help in that respect?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: It could give a lead. Many members of this Chamber do not seem to realise that our farmers are faced with real—not imaginary—difficulties, not only in the Province of which Mr. Thomson is a representative but throughout all the agricultural districts. A Royal

Commissioner has been appointed to inquire into the pastoral industry. He needs no words of commendation from me; but having travelled with Mr. Pyfe for nearly a week and having noticed the manner in which he deals with the people who come before him, I can certainly subscribe to the opinion expressed by other members that he is almost fitted by nature for his task. His experience in the Commonwealth Taxation Department gave him a sound grasp of the industry, and this, with his natural tact and ability, eminently fits him for the position to which he has been appointed. I agree with the Chief Secretary that we may not find three members from each Chamber so naturally suited as is Mr. Pyfe to make an investigation into this matter; still we may be able to do so. As a result of the evidence that would be obtained and of the proposed committee's report, we might be able to see some light to lead us towards the goal we have in mind, which is to lessen the burdens now borne by our farmers. Mr. Cornell said that Mr. Thomson was taking the only course open to him. If in this democratic State and in this democratic age we cannot extend some consideration to our hard-pressed farmers, then what are the benefits of this vaunted democratic system? I support the motion.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (North) [6.11]: I am inclined to think that if the agricultural representatives behind this motion are not careful, their constituents will be saying, "Save us from our political friends." This is not the time for the appointment of committees, nor is it the time to "slang-whang" bank managers. This is not the time to hold up the business of the country, especially the agricultural industry. Something ought to be done to relieve the situation. The Lands Department and the Agricultural Department are dealing with the matter.

Hon. T. Moore: And doing their best.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Yes, with their expert officers. The departments are endeavouring to secure assistance from the Commonwealth for our farmers, assistance which they richly deserve. Now it is proposed that a committee shall be appointed—a sprag in the wheel.

Hon. G. B. Wood: In whose wheel?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The wheel of the chariot that is being run to lead our agriculturists to success.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Are you afraid of the sprag?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I know that if the House agrees to the appointment of the committee—I hope it will not—no good will result. The Government has not a penny.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Give the committee a chance to see what it can do.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: It will probably incur the expenditure of much money that might be useful to hard-up farmers.

Hon. A. Thomson: The farmers are not likely to get the money.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The committee could not control one penny of expenditure upon the agricultural industry. It could only make recommendations. The proposal is that the committee shall be comprised of three members from each House, whose duty will be to make recommendations to our expert officers and—I would like to say—our expert Ministers. Such an action would be almost adding insult to injury.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I was leading up to the point that this country—I will not say this House because somebody might object to the statement—is full of men who think they can do the other fellow's job better than he is doing it. At the same time they are neglecting the duties they are paid to perform. As I understand the position, which has been brought home to us in the North by the Minister for the North-West and members of the Assembly representing North-West constituencies, this is a House of review. As far as the carrying on of the business of the country is concerned, that duty must rest with the Assembly. This being a House of review, the hon. member wants us to step in and tell the Minister, a trained man in his profession, and his expert officers, what they should do, or make recommendations that might not be worth the paper they are written on.

Hon. A. Thomson: And might be worth a lot.

Hon. G. B. Wood: That is not very good argument. It does not say much for committee inquiries.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The proposal is to get a joint committee appointed to inquire into the position of the agricultural industry. Everybody knows the position.

Hon. A. Thomson: And does nothing.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Before I have finished I shall show—if the Minister's figures are correct—that the country has written off 20 millions of money to benefit the agricultural industry. After appointing a joint committee, we are to deal with the Rural Relief Fund Act Amendment Bill. If I can judge the opinion of this House correctly, and I have counted heads, a majority of the members will not accept the provisions contained in that Bill. We cannot call it anything other than repudiation. It involves principles from which I believe a majority of us are not prepared to depart. What the Country Party is attempting to do in this House is to hold up the agricultural business of the State at a time when prompt action is necessary.

Hon. A. Thomson: Can you prove that statement?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I repeat that the only effect of the action by the Country Party will be to hold up the agricultural business at a time when prompt action is necessary. Reading between the lines and judging by the remarks that have been made, the one desire behind the appointment of a joint committee is to get the bank managers present as witnesses and tell them exactly what is thought of them. That is the idea underlying this motion. Having got the bank managers before the joint committee, members would tell them what they thought of them.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: The joint committee would want to hear from the bank managers.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: And then ask them to make further advances to the farmers when there is a Bill before the House, which, if passed, will necessitate the banks' writing down their securities and additional advances that might be made while the committee is sitting; and I remind members we have been told that the inquiry by such a committee would take at least six months. We appear to overlook the fact that the bank managers are acting under instructions from their head offices and the directors, and are handling trust funds—fixed deposit money, current account money, shareholders' money. They

are handling trust funds, and they have a duty to perform by protecting the fixed depositors. There is no suggestion that in the event of the banks' advances being written down, the banks should be relieved of their responsibility to the fixed depositors. Oh no! The banks will be expected to stand that. If we are not careful and one section of the community has its way, we shall have the banking institutions of this State in the same position as that of the Agricultural Bank. The Agricultural Bank is bankrupt, due to the action of political influence on the institution.

Hon. A. Thomson: It cannot be bankrupt.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: If the other banks are brought under the same political influence, they too will become bankrupt.

Hon. J. Cornell: They have already been bankrupt once.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: And they got out of the wet. During the depression, the banks had to finance the Governments, Commonwealth and State, to get them out of the wet. If one section of the community has its way, we shall have the Associated Banks in the position in which the Agricultural Bank finds itself to-day. Some people seem to imagine that if we bankrupt every institution in the place, we shall have a prosperous country. People who think that way have a very narrow vision.

Hon. A. Thomson: You are not suggesting that anyone in this House is thinking along those lines?

Hon. T. Moore: We want the banks to save their assets.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: There is not a member of this House, excepting Mr. Drew, for whom I have a greater respect than I have for Mr. Moore, but he, like some other members, has caught this agricultural microbe. About two years ago Mr. Moore, from his seat in the House, said he thought the banks should not charge any interest at all to the agriculturists in view of the difficulties they were experiencing. I ask Mr. Moore through you, Mr. President, how can a bank pay its way if it adopts a policy of that kind? How can interest be paid to fixed depositors if the banks lend money without charging interest?

Hon. T. Moore: They have many other avenues of making money.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: This is the sort of stuff that is put over the country and helps the microbe to germinate and flourish in the agricultural industry. That sort of thing will do no good. The agricultural industry needs money and needs it now.

Hon. T. Moore: Hear, hear!

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Provision is being made for that, and nothing this House can do, I hope, will alter it. Another statement was made by Mr. Moore a few nights ago. He charged this House with amending the Agricultural Bank Act and allowing that bank more or less to fritter away the people's money. He said also that when other banking institutions were concerned, there were men here to protect the Associated Banks. Such a statement is entire misrepresentation. We did not compel the Agricultural Bank to write off anything. There was a Bill before the House to put the Agricultural Bank on a footing similar to that of the other banks, namely, to enable it to write off indebtedness if it thought fit. Mr. Moore had no right to say that we compelled the Agricultural Bank to write off debts and would not compel the other banks to do likewise. This Bill, if passed, would compel the other banks to write off debts, and if that happened, so surely as I stand here, there would be no more bank advances to the agricultural industry.

Hon. A. Thomson: Oh, rubbish!

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: There is no rubbish about it. It is all very well for politicians to send good money after bad through the Agricultural Bank, but when we get down to sound business, we cannot ask business men to put more money into what is considered by some members of this House to be a sinking ship, and then later put those men in the position of having to write it off.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Do you think the industry is a sinking ship?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: If the industry is now a sinking ship, it is due to the drought. The enormous losses made in the agricultural industry in this State are due to the fact that we put unsuitable people on the land and put them on unsuitable land and expected them to prosper.

Hon. T. Moore: Were all of them unsuitable?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: No; a lot of them have made money, but a lot of them, no matter how much support was given them,

or how much attention might be extended to them by a joint committee, would never make good because many of them do not know their job. They have been spoon-fed too long instead of being required to use their own initiative.

Hon. A. Thomson: They are not the only ones on the land who have failed.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I do not say the agricultural industry is bankrupt, but the Minister for Lands, who is as good a friend to the agricultural industry as we could wish to have, stated in evidence before the Grants Commission yesterday that £8,282,178 had been written off, that losses in operations had totalled £5,174,093, and that the reductions in rates and charges, and land purchases, etc., had amounted to £5,818,706. There were also grants amounting to £524,637. That is a total of approximately 20 million sterling. That is what the Minister for Lands, a responsible Minister of the Crown, said yesterday. It seems to me that what has been going on in Western Australia is that advances have been made which never should have been made, and that in spite of losses on operations the Government repurchased land and sold it to these people at the then value, and have had to reclassify it, and reclassify it again; and now approximately £6,000,000 has been written off on that account alone. To say that the agricultural industry has had no assistance, or not the assistance it deserved, is entirely wrong. The industry has had too much assistance from the Government, instead of being compelled, as other industries are, to rely upon its own efforts to pull through. I could say a great deal on that subject. The position should be left in the hands of those responsible—the Government and its expert officers. They control Treasury funds, they control the money that will be provided for agriculture by the so-called committee which Mr. Thomson laughs about because evidently he has arrived at the conclusion that it is a joke, not having a penny available to assist anybody. The treasury controls the funds and the select committee only make recommendations, and the joke is that the committee cannot incur expenditure. The committee can only make recommendations which expert officers of the Government may or may not accept. If the officers know their job, as I believe they

do, they are not likely to accept the advice of people who do not know the job.

Hon. A. Thomson: That is a reflection on Parliament.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I will not sit on such a committee. I have wasted enough time on committees.

Hon. T. Moore: What about the Peel estate?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I can say something about that. I tried to stop the expenditure there when it was only a million of money. No notice was taken of the committee's report. The Government spent another million of money, and then woke up. I was asked to become chairman of a Royal Commission at a later date. Mr. Troy asked me, and I refused. I said I had tried to save a million of money on the Peel estate, and no notice whatever was taken of my suggestions. I expressed myself in that way to Mr. Troy, who thereupon said, "You did save a million of money by that report, because but for your report another million of money would have been spent there." That select committee's recommendation was to curtail expenditure, not to fritter the country's money away or ask the Associated Banks to fritter away their fixed deposits. We tried to curtail expenditure, and it is because that kind of thing continued and because we put on the land so many people who did not know the job, that the agricultural position is so bad. The immediate position of the industry, I will admit, is due to the drought; but during the good times the agricultural people experienced, they should have conserved enough to carry them over the drought period. Now they find themselves at a dead end and rush to the Government for further support, and a select committee is to be appointed—I hope it will not be—to tell the Government something that the Government knows more about than the members of the select committee can ever find out. The Chief Secretary told us this afternoon that there have been Royal Commissions inquiring into the agricultural industry time after time, and costing about £50,000 altogether. I believe the cost of one Royal Commission ran into £40,000. State Premiers and Ministers for Agriculture are meeting in conference in Melbourne this month to find a solution of the agricultural problem, and this House is being asked to appoint a select committee to tell them what they ought to do.

The committee will not be appointed by my vote, because I shall vote against the motion.

HON. G. B. WOOD (East) [7.53]: The previous speaker has made a fine second-reading speech on the item following this upon the notice paper. I shall try to apply my remarks to the motion, which is whether we shall have a select committee or whether we shall not have a select committee to deal with rural relief. We arrive at remarkably different opinions as to the desirability and the outcome of a select committee's inquiry into this matter as against the wonderful results which accrued from the report of a select committee considered here recently. On the latter occasion we had members rising to say how by reason of the select committee's recommendations they had seen a light which they had never seen before, and how they were led to change their decided opinions on the subject. My reference is to the Government Domain. On this occasion those members do not seem to be game to let the daylight be shown. They want to hide their heads in the sand. They do not want to know the truth. They say they know it already. On the previous occasion they thought they knew it beforehand, but now they all admit that the holding of a select committee had brought to their notice things which caused them to change their minds. In this matter also, if those members would only allow certain evidence to be brought to show the parlous state of the farming industry, they would change their minds. Some of those members, to judge by their remarks, do not know the true state of the case. My experience also tells me that they do not know it.

Hon. V. Hamersley: They do not want to know, and they do not care.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I was recently instrumental, with Mr. Baxter, in having a conference with certain people who have a pretty big say in regard to pastoral and farming pursuits in Western Australia. I say very decidedly that some of the men at that conference did not know the position. One gentleman said he was not going to lose any sleep or get panicky, because one officer had told him that the position in the wheat belt was not as bad as had been made out. So I claim that some of those gentlemen did not know the position. In this instance, too, a select committee will

do valuable work. Mr. Holmes has said that the bank managers here have not much say. If that is so, it is just about time the heads in Sydney and Melbourne were told the true facts. If that has not already been done by the bank managers here, it is just about time the controlling heads were informed through the Parliament of Western Australia. I take strong exception to some remarks of Mr. Holmes. He has pre-judged what the select committee may or may not do. He said the committee's report would not count for much. He also forecast the vote of this House on another motion. He is a pretty clever member if he can do that sort of thing. He went on to say that those supporting the present motion were holding up the business of the country. I cannot reconcile myself to that view. Why should we be holding up the country's business? Mr. Craig said there was a high pile of applications at a bank which would not be dealt with until this matter was decided.

Hon. L. Craig: That is true.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I think the statement amounts to a reflection on the bank manager. It was an assertion that he was holding up business while waiting for legislation to be passed or rejected. In the case of the Government, business goes on pending legislation. The allegation does not say much for the business acumen of bank managers. I would like to see the committee appointed. I would like to see people like Mr. Craig and Mr. Holmes on the committee. It would be an education to them to hear the evidence. This is no joking matter. Members come here and make statements. Mr. Craig has talked about squealing. I would like to take Mr. Craig out to the back of the eastern wheat belt, where I have been recently, because then he would recognise that there was cause for squealing. Mr. Craig has a St. George's-terrace view of the drought-stricken areas.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Will you tell me where squealing will get us?

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Mr. Craig called it squealing; I did not call it squealing. My term for it is complaints to representatives in Parliament. We would be falling down on our job if we did not try to get some sort of inquiry into the question of rural relief.

On motion by Hon. H. S. W. Parker, debate adjourned.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [7.59]: This is a measure which we had before us last year in what might be termed a slightly different form. I fail to understand why the Government has introduced the Bill in this way. Ministers say that they will take from the traffic fees but will return through another channel what they take, and that the local authorities will not lose anything. To me the Bill appears to mean that if the Minister controlling traffic is authorised to take these fees, he will decide how much the local authorities shall receive. They will have to satisfy the Minister that it is to be spent on road construction. I happened to be a member of a road board many years ago, and I know that when the Main Roads Board programme was placed before our conference for consideration, it was decided that the local authorities could give better results by being permitted to receive the traffic fees instead of their being handed over to the Government. The local authorities were permitted to retain the fees, and now we find that after years of the existence of that established practice the Government is desirous of taking the fees from the local bodies and municipalities, merely because the Federal Grants Commission has decreed that the State, in respect of these fees, should come into line with the other States of the Commonwealth. I do not know that it is advisable for us to follow slavishly the example set by Governments of the other States. We must remember that the other States are far more favourably situated than are we in Western Australia. Take a State like Victoria, which is comparatively small in size. The average distance of residents from a railway station or siding is approximately nine miles, while in Western Australia the distance is 16 miles. Thus we have had a great deal more developmental work to carry out, work such as the construction of roads and the provision of facilities to enable people to go out into the back country, far more than have Victoria, and New South Wales. Both those States are much more thickly populated and have been longer established. Now we find that to enable the Government to secure an additional grant we are asked to

hand over the traffic fees amounting, according to my estimation on last year's figures, to £167,609. The fees that were collected last year totalled £186,192, and we are asked to support the Bill which will give the Government power to say, "We are satisfied that you have spent a proportion of the traffic fees upon the roads and so we are ready to return to you £42,203, this amount to be divided up amongst you." When the Minister moved the second reading of the Bill he stated that the Government had spent on road construction—I do not know that he mentioned the period—an amount of £3,406,100. I should like to know actually where that money was spent, and for what purpose. Was it spent in the opening up and the development of group settlements? It may or may not have been spent in that way, and I am not raising any objection to expenditure on that undertaking; but if we cast our minds back to the period when that money was available for the development of the group settlements, we must also bear in mind that the Government got that money at a remarkably cheap rate. Really the cheapness of that money was the Government's downfall. The Government received the money at an interest rate of 1 per cent. or $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and it charged the group settlers 6 per cent. or 7 per cent. for it. So I would like to know whether a proportion of the £3,000,000 odd to which the Minister referred was expended on the roads in the group areas. Was that part and parcel of a sum on which it is now claimed interest should be paid? The money received by way of traffic fees is very substantial; it is an impost upon motorists and I consider that motorists are entitled to its expenditure in the way that it has been used in the past.

I pay a tribute to the Main Roads Board staff for the excellent roads the workers under that organisation have succeeded in constructing. We know that when the workers first began constructing roads, the engineers had to take men who were not accustomed to hard work of any description. Thus, in the earlier stages of road construction, the engineers were somewhat in the position of instructors to men who had not been used to that kind of work. So I presume that in the earlier stages, the work proved to be a little more costly than

it is to-day. The position at the present time is that the sustenance workers who are employed on road construction have become permanent employees of the Main Roads Board, and while they have to stand off for a short period occasionally we must realise that the majority of the men are now thoroughly qualified to give good service to the State. The Government claims that it is paying approximately £160,000 by way of interest on money borrowed for the construction of roads. Where those roads have been constructed we do not know. We must also realise that if it had not been for the money which was available from the Federal Government, money that came from the petrol tax, it would not have been possible to employ as many men as had been engaged on road making. Therefore while it may be said that over £3,000,000 has been expended in road making, there is no gainsaying the fact that it has provided a fruitful avenue of employment and tided the Government over a difficult period. I have to decide whether it is going to be in the interests of the taxpayers to agree to allow the Government to take 75 per cent. of the traffic fees in the metropolitan area. If I support that, I agree to allow that money to go into Consolidated Revenue. We are told that the money is merely going out of one pocket and finding its way into another, and that the municipalities and road boards will not be any worse off. Nevertheless the revenue of the State will benefit to the extent of £147,000 plus £22,000 which is problematical, a sum we may get from the Federal Government if a recommendation in that direction is made by the Grants Commission.

Hon. L. Craig: Less money will be available for expenditure on other works.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I am dealing with the metropolitan area. If we are going to cut away a sum of money from the local authorities in the metropolitan area, it follows that the local authorities must increase the rates. We have been told by the Minister that we are rated at a lower figure than are the people in the Eastern States, and therefore the proposal submitted by the Government is equitable. The local authorities, however, must increase their rates if this money is taken

from them. So I cannot see that what the Government proposes to do will be of benefit to anyone in this State. Then we come to the question of the manner in which the country will be affected. As pointed out by Mr. Craig, less money will be available for expenditure in developing the country. I do not doubt the sincerity of the Government. We have the Grants Commission declaring that it is necessary we should receive more money and the Government says, "It is true that we gave a definite assurance that we would not interfere with the traffic fees, but here is the Grants Commission pointing out how necessary it is that we should receive more money and therefore we will be compelled to ask the country local authorities to forgo a considerable portion of their revenue."

Hon. J. Cornell: That is one reason why Parliament exists.

Hon. A. THOMSON: What would be the position of any country member if he were to support a measure such as this now before us. I am like Sir Hal Colebatch; I object to being dictated to by the Grants Commission.

Hon. J. Cornell: That is what the banks are doing.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes. There are several avenues which, I think, might be exploited by the Government in its desire to raise additional revenue. I intend to oppose the second reading of the Bill.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [8.14]: A similar Bill to this was before this Chamber last session, and I opposed it. What action I will take on this occasion I have not yet definitely decided. As a fact I am at the moment sitting on the fence, and it just depends on the reply that will be given by the Chief Secretary to some of my queries, as to the side on which I shall fall. Some of the objections I had to last year's measure have disappeared, but I am not satisfied that all of them have vanished. The proposal to allow 25 per cent. of the traffic fees to go to local governing bodies has certainly removed one of my objections. In the metropolitan area there are municipalities which in past years have raised loan moneys and built roads and for the last year or two have not had either to make or reconstruct any of the thoroughfares in their districts. I do not intend that any vote

of mine shall help to put in an unfavourable position such municipalities as those. But it appears to me that if the measure is agreed to progressive districts will be penalised and a bonus will be given to those that have neglected their responsibilities to their ratepayers.

Hon. A. Thomson: You have summed up the position completely.

Hon. G. FRASER: If that is so, I cannot vote for the measure. I know of at least one municipality in the metropolitan area which to-day has no roads to make and no roads to reconstruct.

The Honorary Minister: A pocket handkerchief municipality.

Hon. G. FRASER: From the point of view of revenue it is the fourth municipality in this State.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Municipality or road board?

Hon. G. FRASER: Municipality. Some years ago the municipality raised a loan and bituminised every road in the district. The job was done well because for the last few years no maintenance work has been required, nor will any be necessary for the next year or two.

Hon. J. Cornell: The road foreman has gone to the war.

Hon. G. FRASER: Yes, that is how up-to-date the municipality is. In the last couple of years it has not stood still, but secured its own cement slab-making plant. That is how it has spent its money. The municipality is making cement slabs and putting down cement slab footpaths. Under these proposals it will not receive a penny.

Hon. A. Thomson: That is so.

Hon. G. FRASER: Consequently the district will be penalised for having been progressive.

Hon. L. Craig: It will get 25 per cent.

Hon. A. Thomson: No it will not; the money has to be spent on roads.

Hon. G. FRASER: It may get 25 per cent., but that is a very small amount, and will not nearly recoup the municipality for the expenditure incurred. I think that in the past the municipality has collected from traffic fees about £1,500 per year. If that were to be lost to it an increase in the rates of 10d. in the pound would be necessary. The municipality will get nothing from the other 75 per cent. because the whole of the work now is being done on footpaths.

Hon. L. Craig: That comes under the heading of roads.

Hon. G. FRASER: No, it does not.

Hon. L. Craig: It is arguable.

Hon. G. FRASER: The money will not come out of the Federal aid roads fund.

Hon. L. Craig: That is arguable also.

Hon. G. FRASER: I am taking the words of the Minister who introduced the Bill.

Hon. L. Craig: So am I.

Hon. G. FRASER: My interpretation of his words is that expenditure on footpaths could not be made out of assistance from the Federal aid roads fund.

Hon. L. Craig: He did not use those words.

Hon. G. FRASER: That is the effect of what he said.

Hon. A. Thomson: That is the only logical interpretation.

Hon. G. FRASER: That is the loophole. If the Minister can assure me my interpretation is wrong, I will vote for the measure. If he cannot, I must vote against it.

Hon. J. Cornell: When is a footpath a road?

Hon. G. FRASER: Perhaps the hon. member will refer that question to Mr. Parker who may be able to convince us that a footpath is a road. I know that other municipalities may be in a similar position to the one to which I have referred. If the whole of the traffic fees were to be lost to the municipality there would have to be an increase of 10d. in the pound in the rates and one must think twice before voting for a measure that will increase rates to that extent. Even allowing for 25 per cent. of the fees to be given to the municipality, it would not get anything out of the other 75 per cent. and consequently there would still have to be an increase in the rates of 7d. in the pound.

The Honorary Minister: I think you are wrong.

Hon. G. FRASER: I hope I am. I shall wait for the Minister to demonstrate that I am wrong. If he cannot, I will have to vote against the measure. I admit that people in the metropolitan area are paying too much for local government. Some scheme should be devised whereby many of the municipalities would disappear, and much greater efficiency be secured at less cost to the taxpayer. However, that is foreign to this measure.

HON. G. B. WOOD (East) [8.22]: I am sorry that Mr. Fraser is, to use his own words, sitting on the fence, because we were glad to have his support against the measure introduced last year. On this occasion he made an excellent speech in opposition to the Bill. I would like to remind him that this measure is just as undesirable, even though the Government proposes to take only 75 per cent. of the fees. Last night by interjection I suggested to the Minister that somebody would go short in order to make up this money. If the 75 per cent. of the traffic fees that are to go into Consolidated Revenue are to be made up from the Federal petrol tax, the country road boards will go short by that amount.

The Honorary Minister: What about the loan money?

Hon. G. B. WOOD: That is a different matter altogether. If there is any undertaking that it will be so made up, that will be all right. We have been told that the country road boards are not concerned about this matter, but they are because they think they will be deprived of that money. Mr. Hall said that those attending the road board conference should not have passed the motion they did because they were not concerned in the matter. I am sorry he did not raise that question at the conference and start a debate on it. I would have liked to see how he got on in such circumstances. There are at least 35 road boards in my Province that are indirectly concerned. In addition, there are six road boards which are classed as metropolitan road boards and are directly concerned, though they are actually country road boards. None of those boards likes the measure and at one time or another all have asked me to oppose it. It is no use saying they are being misled because they know quite a lot about the matter. I would like to demonstrate to the House, and particularly to city members, how some of the country road boards are absolutely dependent on these traffic fees. I have here a balance sheet—

Hon. L. Craig: That has nothing to do with the matter.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I say that it has. I want to demonstrate how perturbed these authorities are. Although it has been said that the Bill does not directly concern them, they are afraid that the principle involved will be extended to them. Here is a bal-

ance sheet for the year ended the 30th June, 1940. The current rates collected totalled £187 17s. 6d.

The Honorary Minister: What road board is that?

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Westonia. From traffic licenses on private cars £437 17s. 6d. was collected and on motor wagons £535 17s. 6d.

Hon. J. Cornell: A piece of that road board is in the South Province.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: That is the board's misfortune, not mine. Something like £950 has been collected by that road board in traffic fees and only £187 from general rates. Many other road boards in my Province are similarly placed. The position was just as bad for the Koorda road board which had to dispense with its secretary and a similar position exists at Benenbbin, Mukinbudin and other centres. I have not the balance sheets of those road boards but I venture to say that they are as dependent as Westonia on these traffic fees for carrying out their work. I have received several letters on the subject, but I do not intend to read them. They all demonstrate that the local authorities are perturbed about the measure.

There is one other point. We have been told that this measure is only for the duration of the Federal Aid Roads Agreement; that is until 1947. But next year there may not be much petrol tax coming in. I think I raised that point last year. Present indications are that although the agreement will be in existence for seven years there may be little money from that source. We do not know where we shall be in four or five years' time in regard petrol tax money. I oppose the second reading.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (North) [8.27]: Unlike Mr. Fraser, I am not sitting on the rail. I have defined my position as regards additional revenue for the present occupants of the Treasury bench. It seems to me that the more we give them the more they spend. This is an opportunity for us to prevent them from getting any more money to spend. We occupy a good deal of time over taxation measures and speak about the need for economy, but we can make up our minds that so long as the present Ministry occupies the Treasury bench it will define the taxation policy and any amendments we make will, boomerang-like, return to us. We have tried often to make amendments and once or twice nearly got into a fix.

Hon. H. Seddon: It is a pity you did not try again last night.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I do not intend to be led up to the barrier any longer with regard to taxation measures, but here we have an opportunity to curtail expenditure. There is no doubt that the present Government is out to spend all it can get hold of, but this is a time when we ought to conserve expenditure. We should prepare for the time of peace, when so much will have to be done. Two years ago we had a statement from the Chief Secretary, which has not been denied. He said he thought that road boards and municipalities were handling the job well, spending the money and getting good value for it. If we exhaust all our sources of revenue now we shall have nothing upon which to fall back. We have the evidence of what has happened in the last five years ended the 30th June last. The Government in 1939-40 had a revenue of £1,130,000 more than it had in 1935-36, but spent it all. The expenditure in 1935-36 was £9,950,000, and in 1939-40 it was £11,126,000. The Government collected in the last financial year £1,130,000 more than it did five years before, and spent £1,310,000 more than it did then. Of what use is it to give money to the Government only to have it frittered away? My advice to the House is to hold tight to everything we have, and not to give the Government more than we are obliged to. We must conserve our resources for the time when we shall need them. It seems that when it comes to a question of money, both the Government and members of the Country Party are like the horse-leech who says, "Give, give, give," but never says, "It is enough." Last year this Bill was before us. It has developed into more than a joke. We were informed then that the Disabilities Commission had said, "Before we give you any more money you must bring your taxation into line with that of the Eastern States." We have done that; in fact, I think we have passed the taxation of the Eastern States. This year the Government says, "Give us these traffic fees so that we may satisfy the wishes of the Disabilities Commission, and we will give something back in return." The traffic fees were imposed for a specific purpose. Although the procedure may be confined to the metropolitan area for the moment, I have no hesitation in saying that as a result of the

establishment of the precedent, the next thing will be that a drag-net will be used to involve all other municipalities and road boards.

Hon. A. Thomson: I quite agree with you there.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I, therefore, propose to vote against the second reading of the Bill.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [8.35]: Unlike Mr. Fraser and Mr. Holmes I am neither sitting on the fence nor under it, but I am leaning on it and looking over it. Last session I expressed myself as being to a certain extent in sympathy with the proposals contained in the Bill. I voted against the second reading, but the determining factor in that vote was the number of requests I received from local governing bodies in the South Province that I should record my vote in that direction. I pointed out that probably many of the local authorities were under a misapprehension as to whether or not the Bill would apply to them later on. A year has passed by. We have heard what the conference of road boards resolved. Although there are seven road boards in the South Province, not including part of a road board to which Mr. Wood referred, and one municipality and a piece of a municipality, from not one local authority have I received any instructions as to how to vote on this Bill. Members have heard the views of the chairman of the leading road board in the South Province concerning the measure. Mr. W. R. Hall attended the conference, and said that he was not going to be influenced by it, nor by the views of the premier road board, either in the South Province or the North-East Province. I can say the same of myself. Up to date I have not received one request as to how I should cast my vote on this Bill, whereas last year I received requests from almost every road board in the South Province. I pointed out that one of the shortcomings of the measure was that its purport was not given sufficient publicity in the outlying districts. The Chief Secretary has now been taken to task by Mr. Thomson and other members for giving the matter too much publicity, and he also got himself into hot water at the hands of the road board conference.

Meanwhile I will reserve my judgment as to the second reading until the vote is taken.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central) [8.37]: I do not know anything about sitting on the fence or looking over it. The Chief Secretary has the right of reply on the motion for the second reading, and members have the right, if they want to vote intelligently, to suspend final judgment until they have heard the reply to the arguments that have been adduced, and there is no necessity for them to admit that they are either sitting on a fence or looking over it. That is the position in which I find myself. I followed closely the remarks of an old member of the Chamber in the person of Mr. Holmes. To show how a member of his standing in one night can virtually set aside the position he has taken up, I wish to say how struck I was by one sentence of his when he was dealing with another Bill. He said, "So far as the carrying on of the business of this country is concerned, that is the duty of the Government." That gave me food for thought. It is the attitude I took up in connection with the Bill about which the hon. member was speaking. On two separate occasions the Bill has been passed in the popular Chamber. As I stand for democracy, I say it is time we paid attention to the voice of the people. The same thing obtains in connection with this Bill. I remind Mr. Holmes of the weighty utterance to which he gave effect earlier in the evening. On two occasions the popular Chamber, led by the Government of the day, has declared itself in favour of the Bill. The Government says it must have the money. We were told last night by another learned member of the Chamber, a man who has had experience in the Federal and State political spheres, and who has served Western Australia as Agent General at the seat of the Empire, that he was not inclined to be directed by the Grants Commission. We all know that "needs must when the devil drives." We must pay attention to the members of that commission, because we badly need the money we are asking them to give us.

Hon. V. Hamersley: Would you sell your birthright for a mess of pottage?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I would expect such a saying to come from the hon. member, who declared last night that because

of this legislation he had been returned by a bigger majority than ever before. We must deal with things as we find them. Last session we were inundated by requests from local governing bodies. It is not a question of being directed by them. They do not say that sort of thing to individual members, but merely request them to do certain things. It is only right that we should give earnest consideration to such requests. We know the real difficulties that confront those unpaid members of road boards and municipalities, who are rendering such valuable but honorary service throughout the State. They deserve every consideration. I am waiting to have an assurance from the Chief Secretary that the country authorities will not be affected by this legislation. I may be regarded as unsophisticated when I say I am prepared to accept that assurance. At the opening of the session we were reminded of the dire period through which we are passing. It was decided that we should not be called upon to deal with contentious matters, and we were going to give the Government our whole support in an endeavour to win the war, but it is of no use to indulge in that kind of talk unless we back it up with our actions. The Government states that it wants the money, and that local authorities in the metropolitan area will not find themselves in the position they imagine will be theirs. I am awaiting an assurance from the Chief Secretary that country local authorities will not suffer by reason of this measure. If he can give me an assurance that that will be the position, I will seriously consider giving my vote in favour of the Bill.

On motion by the Honorary Minister, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.14 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 16th October, 1940.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTION—ROCKY GULLY.

Land Repricing.

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Has a decision been arrived at in regard to the repricing of the land at Rocky Gully (west of Mt. Barker)? 2, If so when will the new price list be available? 3, If not when may a decision be expected?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, No. 2, Answered by No. 1. 3, After completion of the Surveyor General's review of the reports in connection therewith.

QUESTION—SEED WHEAT AND BAGS.

Farmers' Requirements.

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for Lands: 1, As a number of farmers will not obtain seed wheat from their crops and practically all wheat will this year be handled in bulk are steps being taken—(a) to ascertain what farmers will require seed wheat; (b) to ensure that clean seed wheat in bags will be available from farmers who will have it available; (c) to compensate such last-mentioned farmers for the extra expense incurred re bagging? 2, If arrangements are not already in hand will he take early action to ensure a satisfactory solution of the problem including, if necessary, the making of representations to the Australian Wheat Board to enable seed wheat to be sold by farmers possessing it?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, The Department of Agriculture and the Agricultural Bank are dealing with these